

Korean Relativization

Ramli Md. Salleh

There are almost as many definitions of relative clauses as there are writers on the subject. For this paper, I am taking the definition by de Rijk (1972), which combines both syntactic and semantic features. He defines a relative clause to be a "sentence modifying a noun phrase, such that the deep structure of the sentence contains a noun phrase identical to the noun phrase it modifies" (p.115). This definition tells us that, to be considered as a relative clause, a sentence must modify a noun phrase (NP), (this head noun can either precede or follow its modifying sentence depending on the language) and it must contain an NP coreferential to the head NP in the deep structure.

In discussing relativization in Korean, I am taking Keenan and Comrie's (1972) notion of Accessibility Hierarchy (AH) as a guide. AH is a hierarchy of NP positions in order of ascending difficulty of relativization. For each position on the hierarchy, "there are at least two languages having major strategies that naturally relativize on the point and all points to the left of it but none on the points to the right of it" (p.2). In other words, they claim that NPs on the upper hand of the AH, given below, are universally easier to relativize than those on the lower end. Thus some languages have relative clause forming strategies which apply only to subjects, other languages have strategies which apply only to subjects and direct objects, others have ones which apply only to the top three positions on the AH and so on. The hierarchy is:

subject > direct object > indirect object > object of preposition > possessor NP
> object of comparative particle.

A major strategy is defined as the one that can be used to relativize subject NP. A minor strategy is used to refer to types of relativization that are not available for subjects. They give Malagasy as an example of language which has only one major strategy and it works only on subjects. In Keenan (1972b) he refers to this major strategy (the Basic Constraint) as the basic relative clause strategy in Malagasy. Thus, in Malagasy from (1) we can form (2) but not (3). (examples from Keenan and Comrie (1972)).

- (1) manasa ny lamba ny vehivavy
 is washing the clothes the woman
- (2) ny vehivavy izay manasa ny lamba
 the woman that is washing the clothes

- (3) *ny lamba izay manasa ny vehivavy
(the clothes that the woman is washing)

In this paper, I will discuss three topics pertaining to Korean relative clause. First I will show some of the features of Korean relative clause construction, secondly, I would like to look at NPs that can be relativized, and finally I would try to show that deletion of some case markers i.e. goal and source will result in ambiguity in the relativized structures.

1. Features of Korean relative clause can be described as follows:

- a. Relative clause precedes the head noun.
- b. There are no morphemes corresponding to English relative pronouns. (who, which, that).
- c. In Korean relativization, the particles or case markers attached to the NP which is coreferential to the head noun are obligatorily deleted together with the NP, as shown in (4) and (5).

- (4) nun-i ki-san-il taph-atta.
snow-subj. def.-mountain-obj. cover-past
The snow covered the mountain.

- (5) (nun-i) ki-san-il taphko-ittan nun-i nog-atta.
snow-subj. def.-mountain-obj. cover-past prog. snow-subj. melt-past
The snow which covered the mountain has melted.

Notice that in (5) the subject NP *nun* was relativized and deleted along with its particle *i*.

- d. Tense morphemes occurring in relative clauses are different from those in matrix sentences.

- (6) ki-saram-in mar-il tha-nda. (matrix)
def.-man-topic horse-obj. ride-present
The man rides a horse.

- (7) mar-il tha-nin ki-saram-i (relative clause)
horse-obj. ride-rel. def.-man-subj.
The man who rides a horse...

In (6) the present tense is represented by *-nda*, and in the relative clause construction (7), the tense is marked by *-nin*. I think this morpheme or particle must be regarded as tense marker rather than a relative clause marker, because it does not appear in the relative clause of other tenses as in (8), and (9).

- (8) mar-il thago-innin ki-saram-i
horse-obj. ride-present prog. def.-man-subj.
The man who is riding a horse...

- (9) mar-il thago-ittən ki-saram-i
horse-obj. ride-past prog. def.-man-subj.

The man who was riding a horses...

2. It seems that in Korean, the first four NPs in Keenan and Comrie's AH can be relativized easily. However, for the fourth NP on the hierarchy (object of preposition), relativization does not work as well as for the first three NPs.

a. *Subject*:

- (10) os-il sethak-hanin saram-i na-ril po-atta.
clothes-obj. wash-prog. man-subj. I-obj. see-past

The man who was washing the clothes saw me.

b. *Direct object*:

- (11) ki-saram-i sethak-han os-i
def.-man-subj. wash-past clothes-subj.

The clothes that the man washed...

c. *Indirect object*:

- (12) john-i chæg-il cu-n sonyən-i na-ril po-atta.
John-subj. book-obj. give-past boy-subj. I-obj. see-past

The boy to whom John gave the book saw me.

d. *Object of preposition*:

- (13) næ-ga kiri-nin pen-in p'algatha.
I-subj. draw-rel. pen-top. red

The pen with which I draw is red.

- (14) kəmi-ga næri-ə on chənjang
spider-subj. descend-past ceiling

The ceiling from which the spider came down...

- (15) ?næ-ga chæg-il pilli-n john-in
I-subj. book-obj. borrow-past John-top.

John from whom I borrowed the book...

- (16) john-i chaja-kan iisa
John-subj. visit-past doctor

The doctor to whom John went...

- (17) john-i isa-kan sigol
John-subj. move-past country

The country to which John moved...

Note that not all objects of prepositions in Korean can be relativized as shown in (19).

- (18) ki-san-i nun-iro təphiə-itta.
def.-mountain-subj. snow-prep. cover-present

The mountain is covered with snow.

- (19) *ki-san-i təphiə-innin nun-i nog-atta.
 def.-mt.-subj. cover-present prog. snow-subj. melt-past

(The snow with which the mountain is covered has melted.)

The only naturally elicited renditions of the English relative clause above is a sentence that has the position to be relativized into as a subject. Thus, *the snow with which the mountain is covered has melted*, is rendered as *kisanil təpkoittən nuni nogatta* (*the snow which covered the mountain has melted*).

Both Possessor and Object of comparative particle NPs cannot be relativized. The preferred alternative of (21) is (22) in which the original sentence (20) has been lexically reorganised so that the NP relativized into is a subject position.

- (20) na-nin ki-saram-boda khiga khida.
 I-top. def.-man-comp. height big

I am taller than the man.

- (21) *næ-ga khiga khi-n saram-i
 I-subj. height big man-subj.

The man I'm taller than...

- (22) na-boda khiga cag-in saram-i
 I-comp. height short man-subj.

The man who is shorter than me...

The possessor NP in (23) is relativized as in (24) where the NP relativized has been made a subject.

- (23) na-nin ki-saram-ii cha-ril unjən hago-itta.
 I-top. def.-man-poss. car-obj. drive do-present prog.

I am driving the man's car.

- (24) næ-ga unjən hago-innin cha-ii cuinin saram-i
 I-subj. drive do-present prog. car-poss. owner-being man-subj.

The man who is the owner of the car I am driving...

3. Finally let us look into an interesting phenomenon in the deletion of goal and source markers in the process of relativization. In other words, the deletion of these markers or particles together with their NPs results in the ambiguity of the relativized structures.

- (25) kəmi-ga sikthag-esə næriə-watta.
 spider-subj. table-loc. descend-past

The spider came down from the table.

- (26) kəmi-ga næriə-on sikthak
 spider-subj. descend-past table

a. the table from which the spider came down...

b. the table on which the spider came down...

In (26) we notice that the relativized NP *sikthak* together with its locative particle *esə* has been deleted through the process of relativization. This results in ambiguity where the reading can be either (a) or (b). The spider can come down on the table from the ceiling, and it also can come down from the table to the floor. However, earlier we noted that example (14), *kəmiga nəriəon chənjang* (the ceiling from which the spider came down) is possible and does not result in ambiguity. This is due to the fact that the head noun *chənjang* (ceiling) can only be the beginning point of the movement of the verb (come down). There is only one reading (for reason having to do with the outside world).

REFERENCES

- de Rijk, R (1972) 'Relative Clauses in Basque: A Guided Tour,' in *Chicago Which Hunt*, CLS.
- Keenan, E. and B. Comrie (1972) 'Noun Phrase Accessibility and Universal Grammar,' dittoed.
- Keenan, E. (1972b) 'Relative Clause Formation in Malagasy,' in *Chicago Which Hunt*, CLS.
- Tagashira Yoshiko (1972) 'Relative Clauses in Korean,' in *Chicago Which Hunt*, CLS.

Department of Malay Letters
National University of Malaysia
Bangi, Selangor
Malaysia

(Received 29 November 1982)